

RULES

SISTERS OF MERCY

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RULE AND CONSTITUTIONS

— OF THE —

RELIGIOUS


SISTERS OF MERCY.



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RULE AND CONSTITUTIONS
— OF THE —
RELIGIOUS
SISTERS OF MERCY.

FIRST PART.

CHAPTER I.

OF THE OBJECT OF THE INSTITUTE.

The Sisters admitted to this Religious Congregation, besides attending particularly to their own perfection, which is the principal end of all Religious Orders, should also have in view what is peculiarly characteristic of this Institute—that is, a most serious application to the Instruction of Poor Girls, Visitation of the Sick, and Protection of Distressed Women of good character.

2. In undertaking this arduous but meritorious duty of instructing the poor, the Sisters whom God has been pleased to call to this state of perfection should animate their zeal and fervor by the example of their Divine Master, Jesus Christ, who has testified on all occasions a tender love for the poor, and has declared that He would consider as done to Himself whatever should be done unto them.

CHAPTER II.

OF THE SCHOOLS.

1. The Sisters appointed by the Mother Superior to attend the Schools shall, with all charity and humility, purity of intention and confidence in God, undertake the charge; and, mindful of their vocation and of the glorious recompense attached to the faithful discharge of this duty, shall cheerfully accept of all the labor and fatigue of it.

2. Before the Sisters enter school, they shall raise their hearts to God and to the Queen of Heaven, recommending themselves and the children to their care and protection. They shall endeavor to inspire them with a sincere devotion to the Passion of Jesus Christ, to His Real Presence in the Most Holy Sacrament, to the Immaculate Mother of God, and to their Guardian Angels.

3. The Sisters shall teach the children to offer their hearts to God when they awake in the morning; adore His Sovereign Majesty; return Him thanks for all His favors, and arm themselves with the sign of the Cross. They shall instruct them how to direct all their thoughts, words, and actions to God's glory, implore His grace to know and love Him, and fulfill His commandments; how to examine their conscience, and respect parents and superiors.

4. They shall teach them the method of

assisting devoutly at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, how to prepare for Confession, and shall be ever attentive to dispose them for the Sacraments of Confirmation and of the Holy Communion.

5. The Sisters shall feel convinced that no work of charity can be more productive of good to society, or more conducive to the happiness of the poor, than the careful instruction of women; since, whatever be the station they are destined to fill, their example and advice will always possess influence, and wherever a religious woman presides peace and good order are generally to be found.

CHAPTER III.

OF THE VISITATION OF THE SICK.

1. Mercy, the principal path pointed out by Jesus Christ to those who are desirous of following Him, has in all ages of the

Church excited the faithful in a particular manner to instruct and comfort the sick and dying poor, as in them they regarded the person of our Divine Master, who has said: "Amen I say to you, as long as you did it to one of these, my least brethren, you did it to me."

2. The many miraculous cures performed by our Saviour, and the power of healing granted to the Apostles, evince His great tenderness for the sick. The most eminent Saints have devoted their lives to this work of mercy, amongst whom Saint Vincent of Paul, Saint John of God, Saint Camillus of Lellis, Saint Ignatius, Saint Francis Xavier, Saint Aloysius, Saint Angela Merici, Saint Catherine of Sienna, and Saint Catherine of Genoa were distinguished. Such bright examples, and the great recompense promised, are strong motives for the Sisters to fulfill with fervor and delight every part of this meritorious duty.

3. Let those whom Jesus Christ has graciously permitted to assist Him in the person of His suffering poor have their hearts animated with gratitude and love; and, placing all their confidence in him, ever keep His unwearied patience and humility present to their minds, endeavoring to imitate Him more perfectly every day in self-denial, patience, and entire resignation. Thus shall they gain a crown of glory, and the great title of children of the Most High, which is assuredly promised to the merciful.

4. The Sisters appointed by the Mother Superior to visit the sick shall prepare quickly; and when ready shall visit the Blessed Sacrament, to offer to their Divine Master the action they are about to perform, and ask from Him the graces necessary to promote His glory and the salvation of souls.

5. Before the Sisters leave the Convent, they shall endeavor to understand perfectly the way they are to go, and if some places

cannot be found without making inquiry, it will be most prudent to go into a huckster's or baker's shop, where the poor are generally known, always speaking with that gravity which ensures respect; but they should not continue looking about, since charity is not only "kind but doth not behave unseemly."

6. Two Sisters shall always go out together; the greatest caution and gravity shall be observed passing through the streets, walking in neither slow nor hurried pace; not stopping to converse or salute those whom they meet; keeping close without leaning, preserving recollection of mind, as if they expected to meet their Divine Redeemer in each poor habitation, since He has said: "Where two or three are in my name I will be."

7. One of the Sisters should be capable of reading very distinctly, and have sufficient judgment to select what is most suitable to each case. She should speak in an easy, soothing, impressive manner, so as

not to embarrass or fatigue the poor patient; the other Sister can be very conducive to the good which is accomplished by uniting in fervent prayer.

8. Great tenderness should be employed, and when there is not immediate danger of death, it will be well to relieve the distress first, and to endeavor by every practicable means to promote the cleanliness, ease, and comfort of the patient; since we are ever most disposed to receive admonition and instruction from those who evince compassion for us.

9. The Sisters shall always have spiritual good most in view; hence when they find habits have been careless, religious duties long neglected, and coldness and indifference seem to prevail, it is most necessary they should endeavor to create alarm, by speaking of the dreadful judgments of God towards impenitent sinners, and admonishing the patient that if we do not seek His mercy and protection in the way He has

appointed, we must be miserable for all eternity. They should add the strongest entreaties with evident and sincere concern; for if our hearts be not affected, in vain should we hope to affect theirs; above all, they should pray in an audible voice and most earnest, emphatic manner, that God may look with pity on His poor creatures and bring them to repentance. This will be most likely to dispose them for a good Confession, upon which all depends, and to obtain which every prayer and instruction shall be directed. The Sisters shall question them on the principal mysteries of our holy faith, and if necessary instruct them.

10. When recovery is hopeless, it must be made known with great caution; and if time permit, done by degrees; assuring them of the peace and joy they will feel when entirely resigned to the will of God. If the discourse should turn on disposing of property by will, let the Sisters endeavor

to avoid taking part in it, and confine themselves to general matters; let them suggest to the patient to make known his intentions to a proper person, and one who deserves his confidence. As for what concerns the procuring relief for the indigence of the sick person's family, let them promise to attend to it as far as in their power, in the manner their state permits, so that, removing all anxiety, the mind may be kept composed, to think of God alone.

11. When the Sisters return to the Convent, they shall again visit the Most Holy Sacrament, thank Jesus Christ for His protection, humble themselves before Him for any imperfection they have fallen into, and most earnestly pray that whatever assistance has been afforded by His grace and mercy may conduce to His own glory, the salvation of their souls, and of those whom they have visited.

CHAPTER IV.

OF THE ADMISSION OF DISTRESSED WOMEN.

1. Distressed women of good character admitted to the House of Mercy shall, if necessary, be instructed in the principal mysteries of religion, and required to comply with their religious obligations. They shall be induced to repair as much as possible their past neglect by piously preparing to approach the Holy Sacraments, conforming their will to the regular discharge of the duties of the state in which God has placed them.

2. Suitable employment shall be sought for, and great care taken to place them in situations for which they are adapted, in order that they may continue such length of time in their service as shall establish a character on which they can depend for future support. Many leave their situations, not so much for want of merit, as through incapacity to fulfill the duties they

unwisely engaged in. They shall not be encouraged to remain long in the House of Mercy, as in general it will be better for them soon to enter on that state and employment by which they are to live.

3. Although it should be considered a general rule to ask suitable testimonials, and particularly that of the parish clergyman, concerning conduct and poverty; nevertheless, there are some who deserve favor though they cannot procure them. But yet on these also shall the parish clergyman be in all cases consulted, the better to know their qualities for the guidance of the Superiors. With this precaution, the daughters of reduced tradesmen, who are not practically instructed in religion, or known beyond the humble circle of their parents' home, may be admitted on the recommendation of a pious, orderly woman, who had lived some years in the same neighborhood; and they should be allowed to remain in the House until prac-

ticed in servitude, and entitled to a recommendation from the institute.

4. The Sisters shall most carefully avoid all familiarity with those persons, never allowing them to speak of the families with whom they lived, or asking the reason of their leaving their respective situations. The Mother Superior, or the Sister she appoints, shall make every necessary inquiry.

5. They shall be required to go regularly to confession to the Confessor appointed by the Ordinary; and the days of Communion shall be the Feasts of precept, comprising also those lately dispensed with; all solemn Feasts of the Blessed Virgin, although ferial days, and the first Friday of every month.

CHAPTER V.

OF THE VOW OF POVERTY.

1. As the Sisters, in order to become conformable to their Heavenly Spouse Christ Jesus, have in quitting the world renounced

all property in earthly things, they should frequently revolve in mind how tenderly He cherished holy poverty. Born in a stable, laid in a manger, He suffered from cold, hunger, and thirst, in the course of His mortal life; not having a place to lay His head, He died naked on the Cross. In His own person He consecrated this virtue and bequeathed it as a most valuable patrimony to His followers.

2. The Sisters shall therefore keep their hearts perfectly disengaged from all affection to the things of this world, content with the food and raiment allowed them, and willing at all times to give up whatever has been allotted to them. They shall not give nor receive any present without permission from the Mother Superior. When with her permission they receive any present from their relatives or other persons, it must be considered as for the use of the Community, and not for the particular use of the receiver.

3. Nothing shall appear in their dress but what is grave and modest; nor can they keep in their cells anything superfluous, costly, or rich, in furniture or decorations; all must be suitable to religious simplicity and poverty.

CHAPTER VI.

OF THE VOW OF CHASTITY.

As Chastity is a most angelical virtue, consecrated in the person of Jesus Christ, and recommended in the Evangelical Law with the most distinguished encomiums, the Sisters shall esteem nothing more precious than this heavenly gift, and they should always observe the strictest guard on their senses, lest the enemy, who is constantly on the watch, should penetrate through these avenues to their souls, and tarnish in the least the purity of their hearts.

CHAPTER VII.

OF THE VOW OF OBEDIENCE.

1. The Sisters are always to bear in mind that, by the Vow of Obedience, they have forever renounced their own will and resigned it to the direction of their Superiors. They are to obey the Mother Superior as holding her authority from God, rather through love than servile fear. They shall love and respect her as their Mother; and in order that she may be enabled to direct them in the way of divine service, it is recommended to them to make known to her their penitential works and mortifications, with the advantages derived from them.

2. They shall, without hesitation, comply with all the directions of the Mother Superior, whether in matters of great or little moment, agreeable or disagreeable. They shall never murmur, but with humility and spiritual joy carry the sweet yoke

of Jesus Christ. They shall not absent themselves from the common exercises without her leave, except in a case of pressing urgency; and if they cannot then have access to her, they shall make known the reason of their absence immediately after. They shall obey the call of the bell as the voice of God.

CHAPTER VIII.

OF THE RECEPTION OF POSTULANTS—THEIR
ADMISSION TO THE HABIT AND PROFESSION.

1. Such as desire to embrace this Institute shall be previously examined, with regard to their vocation, by the Bishop, or a priest delegated by him, and by the Mother Superior. If admitted into the Convent they shall continue Postulants for six months, and employ their time as shall be appointed.

2. If their conduct during this time be

humble and conformable to the spirit of the Institute, they shall be allowed to solicit in Chapter the Religious Habit; and if the majority of votes (which must be secret) be in their favor, they shall receive it and commence their Novitiate.

3. The time of their Novitiate shall continue two entire years. Two months before the end of the Novitiate they shall, with the permission of the Mother Superior, present their request to the Community to be admitted to Profession; and if the Chapter accede thereto, a scrutiny shall be made with white and black beans; and if the majority be in their favor, they shall spend the remainder of the Novitiate as circumstances shall allow, in prayer and other spiritual exercises.

4. As many shall be admitted as the funds of the House shall permit, and no more, unless the subject bring with her a sufficient dower for her support and all other things necessary. Lodgers shall not

be admitted (with the exception of a foundress or very particular benefactress).

5. The Young Professed shall remain under the direction of the Mistress of Novices for two years, without either active or passive vote (except the first seven professed in each Convent), who shall have both active and passive vote immediately on their profession.

FORM OF THE ACT OF PROFESSION.

In the name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and under the protection of His Immaculate Mother, Mary ever Virgin, I, [N.], called in religion Sister [N.], do vow and promise to God, Poverty, Chastity, and Obedience, and the Service of the Poor, Sick, and Ignorant, and to persevere until death in this Institute of Our Lady of Mercy, according to its approved Rule and Constitutions; under the authority and in presence of you, my Lord and Most Rev. Father in God, [N.], Archbishop of this

diocese, and of our Reverend Mother, [N.], called in Religion [N.], Mother Superior of this Convent of Mercy, [N.], this —— day of [N.] —— in the year of our Lord.

Should the Mother Superior through sickness not attend, they shall name the Mother Assistant.

CHAPTER IX.

OF THE OFFICE AND MENTAL PRAYER.

1. As the Sisters of this Institute must employ a great part of their time instructing the poor, they shall be obliged only to the short Office of Our Blessed Lady, which they shall daily recite together. Before they begin they shall consider the infinite Majesty of that God whom they are about to praise, and they shall endeavor to perform that holy exercise with all attention and devotion.

2. Mental prayer or meditation has ever

been considered most effectual to imprint deeply on the mind the sublime truths of religion, to elevate the soul, and inflame the heart with the love of God and of heavenly things. By it the Saints attained perfection in all states, and it is the way which they marked out to all who aspire to any degree of sanctity. This practice the founders and institutors of all Religious Orders have recommended and expressly established in their Constitutions, and though differently inspired to compose that admirable variety of Rules and Observances which decorate the Church of God, they all had and have the same spirit with regard to the necessity and advantages of mental prayer.

3. The Sisters of this Institute shall therefore most sedulously attend to this most salutary exercise; in this shall they take delight, and seek in it their comfort and refreshment from the labors and fatigues of the Institute.

CHAPTER X.

OF SPIRITUAL EXERCISES AND RENAVAL OF VOWS.

1. Spiritual exercises being justly considered one of the most powerful means for the advancement of Religious persons in the perfection of their state, the Sisters of this Institute shall make every year a Spiritual Retreat of ten days, immediately before the Feast of the Assumption of our Blessed Lady, and another in the three last days of the year. They shall also devote the first Sunday of every month to a preparation for death.

2. The Sisters shall, on the first day of every year, make a Renewal of their Vows, to excite in their hearts an increase of fervor in the service of their Heavenly Spouse, by so solemn a commemoration of the obligations they have contracted.

FORM OF THE ACT OF RENEWAL OF VOWS.

Omnipotent and eternal God! I, Sister [N.], do ratify this day in the presence of

thy heavenly court, the Vows which I made at my Profession, and promise faithfully to observe Poverty, Chastity, Obedience, and the service of the Poor, Sick, and Ignorant, and to persevere till the end of my life in this Institute of Our Blessed Lady of Mercy, according to its approved Rule and Constitutions, and under her protection. I most earnestly supplicate thy Divine Goodness, through the merits of Jesus Christ, to grant me grace to fulfill these obligations.

CHAPTER XI.

OF CONFESSION AND COMMUNION.

1. The Sisters shall confess every Saturday, also the eves of great Feasts, and of the Feasts of the Blessed Virgin.

2. The Bishop shall appoint a Confessor; he shall also appoint extraordinary Confessors, as recommended by the holy

Council of Trent, to whom the Sisters shall present themselves at the appointed times.

3. The most holy Sacrament of the Eucharist having been instituted by Jesus Christ for the nourishment of our souls, as well as for our sacrifice, and as in it He imparts to us the most precious pledge of His love, the Sisters shall cherish in their hearts the tenderest and most affectionate devotion towards this adorable Sacrament. They shall assist daily at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass with the greatest possible devotion, and shall receive the Holy Communion with lively faith, profound humility, and the utmost purity, as often as their spiritual director shall permit.

CHAPTER XII.

OF THE DEVOTION TO THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST, TO THE MOST HOLY SACRAMENT, AND THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS.

1. The Sisters of this Congregation should have the most tender devotion to

the Passion of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. They shall often recall to mind and meditate on the different circumstances of it, in order to excite in themselves an ardent desire of conforming themselves to their suffering Redeemer, persuaded that to share hereafter in His glory they must here participate in His sufferings and humiliations. They shall offer the labors and fatigues of their state, the mortifications they undergo, and all their pains of mind and body, in union with the sufferings of their Crucified Spouse. They shall make some part of the Passion the subject of their meditation on every Friday, and at three o'clock in the afternoon they shall adore on their knees in choir Jesus Christ for us made obedient to death, nay to the death of the cross. They shall then say five Paters and five Aves in honor of His sacred wounds and death, for those that are in their agony, and in mortal sin, and for all the souls in purgatory.

2. Jesus Christ really present in the Most Holy Eucharist shall be the constant object of their affection and devotion. They shall often reflect on the infinite charity displayed for us in that ever adorable Sacrament, and by frequent visits every day they shall pay assiduous court to their Heavenly Spouse on the throne of His love; uniting their acts of adoration, praise, thanksgiving, and homage to those of the angels who continually attend Him in the tabernacle. In all their sufferings and anxieties, in all their fears, afflictions, and temptations, they shall seek comfort and consolation at the foot of the altar, where He lovingly invites them in these words: "Come to me all you that labor and are burthened, and I will refresh you."

3. They shall also possess a most tender devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, fount of every grace and object of our most tender love; and concurring with the pious wishes of the Catholic Church, they

shall raise their minds and affections to that boundless love which the Divine Redeemer has shown for mankind in the institution of the Eucharist, and in His dolorous Passion and Death suffered for our Redemption, and which is daily evinced to us by the treasures of graces and the immense benefits which flow from His loving and amiable Heart. They shall on their part endeavor to atone for the outrages suffered by Him, for which the malice and ingratitude of mankind make so base a return.

CHAPTER XIII.

OF DEVOTION TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY.

1. Devotion to the Mother of God has always been dear to Religious persons. But as this Congregation is immediately under her protection, and she is (under God) its principal Protectress, the Sisters

shall always have the warmest and most affectionate devotion to her; regarding her in a special manner as their Mother and the great model they are obliged to imitate, that by her intercession and under her powerful protection they may be enabled to fulfill the obligations of this holy Institute, and implant Jesus Christ in the hearts of the poor whom they are charged to instruct.

2. They shall have, individually, unlimited confidence in her; have recourse to her in all their difficulties and spiritual wants, and by the imitation of her virtues study to render themselves worthy of her protection. They shall celebrate her festivals with joy and devotion, and shall impress on the minds of all whom they can influence the greatest respect, veneration, and love for her. They shall recite every day five decades of the Rosary in her honor.

3. On the Feast of Our Lady of Mercy

every year, the whole community, with lighted tapers in their hands, shall, on their knees before the altar, make the following Act of Consecration, which the Mother Superior shall read in an audible voice, in the name and on behalf of the Community; and every newly professed Sister shall read it on the day of her profession :

ACT OF OBLATION AND CONSECRATION TO THE
MOST BLESSED MOTHER OF GOD.

Most holy and glorious Virgin Mother of God, we, thy humble suppliants, convinced how much we stand in need of the grace of God to fulfill the arduous duties and obligations of our pious Institute, and of the greatness of thy power with Jesus Christ thy beloved Son, and of thy goodness towards poor Christians, most fervently salute thee this day as the Mother of Mercy, in full confidence of obtaining the divine assistance through thy intercession. We,

therefore, most clement Virgin, prostrate before thee with all humility, beseech thee to be most graciously pleased to accept the oblation which we all irrevocably make on this holy day of ourselves to thy love and service; proposing with the divine assistance to bear always towards thee the most cordial respect and veneration, and to engage, as far as in our power, all others to love, honor, and respect thee. Deign most pure and immaculate Virgin Mother of God, to receive all and every one of us in particular under thy holy protection. We look up to thee as our Mother, our Lady, and our Mistress; as our Protectress, Advocate, and Directress, humbly entreating thee to obtain through the merits of thy adorable Son, the pardon of all our sins and transgressions against the Divine Majesty, and of all our negligence in thy holy service. We beseech thee also to obtain of His infinite goodness, that we may always and on all occasions be favored

with thy singular assistance, especially in the arduous functions of our Institute, and in the practice of every Religious virtue. In fine, we most earnestly request that thou wilt be graciously pleased to obtain, that perfect union of heart and mind may always reign amongst us, that we may ever be faithful in the observance of our Rule and in the grace of our vocation; and that having with fidelity served thy Divine Son by imitating thy virtues on earth, we may with thee and all the elect praise and bless Him in heaven for all eternity. Amen.

4. The Saints to whom the Sisters of this Institute are recommended to have particular devotion are Saint Joseph, Saint Joachim, and Saint Anne, the holy Apostles Peter and Paul, Saint John the Evangelist, Saint Patrick, Saint Bridget, Saint Augustine, Saint Monica, Saint Peter Nolasco, Saint Vincent of Paul, Saint John of God, Saint Camillus of Lellis, Saint Joseph Calasantius, Saint Ignatius, Saint Francis

Xavier, Saint Aloysius Gonzaga, Saint Angela Merici, Saint Catharine of Genoa, and Saint Catharine of Sienna.

CHAPTER XIV.

OF THE PERFECTION OF OUR ORDINARY ACTIONS.

1. The perfection of the Religious soul depends not so much on performing extraordinary actions, as on performing extraordinarily well the ordinary exercises of every day. In this particularly consists the difference between the perfect and imperfect in a Religious Community; the daily duties are the same for all, the manner of performing them distinguishes the one from the other.

2. The Sisters of this Congregation shall, therefore, endeavor to acquit themselves of their ordinary duties with all possible care and attention, according to the advice of the Holy Ghost: "The good you ought to

do, do it well," viz.: Prayer, examen of conscience, assisting at Mass, Office, Spiritual lecture, meals, recreations, etc. By performing all these actions well they shall perfect themselves, and their day shall be full of merit and good works.

3. But in order to perform these ordinary actions well, with a view to their own perfection, they must have the purest intention of pleasing God, and God alone must be the principal motive of all their works. It is the pure intention of pleasing God that renders the good work valuable and meritorious; and without it the most laborious duties of the Institute, the greatest austerities, the most heroic actions and sacrifices are of little value, being divested of that merit which flows from a pure and upright intention; while, on the contrary, actions the most indifferent, when accompanied by it, become valuable and meritorious of eternal life. Nothing is lost; every word and action fructifies;

the Religious soul enriches herself every moment and lays up treasures of glory for an endless eternity.

4. The Sisters shall consider purity of intention in all their works, not merely as a simple practice of piety, but as an essential duty of Religion. They shall therefore most studiously watch over themselves and guard against the insinuations of self-love, lest they lose the merit of their labors and good works by self-complacency or vain-glory, or by having in their actions any other motive or end in view than to please God. They are never to act through inclination or caprice, but all should be performed with regularity and exactness, and be referred with the utmost fervor to the divine honor and glory, in union with the most holy actions and infinite merits of Jesus Christ. They shall therefore not only make a general offering in the morning to God of the works and actions of the day, but also renew it frequently in the

day; having always in mind and engraven in their hearts this important advice of the Apostle: "Whether you eat or whether you drink, or whatever else you do, do all for the glory of God and in the name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

5. The means by which the Sisters may preserve this purity of intention, and perform well all their actions are, first, to keep themselves always in the presence of God, remembering that He sees them, and that on the manner in which they perform these works depends the judgment He will pronounce on them; secondly, to do each work as if it were the only one they had to do; by this they will avoid all hurry and precipitation in their actions; thirdly, to fulfill the duty of every day as if that day were to be the last of their mortal life, ever mindful of the advice of their Heavenly Spouse: "Watch; be always prepared; you know not the day nor the hour."

CHAPTER XV.

OF EMPLOYMENT OF TIME.

As idleness according to the Holy Ghost teacheth much evil, and as we must render an exact account in judgment of our precious time, the Sisters shall be careful never to indulge idleness, but be always engaged in some useful employment. Wherefore, whatever time they have to spare from the functions of the Institute, they shall diligently employ in manual works, or such other corporal or spiritual occupations as the Mother Superior shall appoint. They shall never let themselves be seen running giddily through the convent, but shall always and in all places preserve in their deportment a gravity becoming religious persons. In every house there shall be an horarium suited to the circumstances of the place and the duties of the Institute, and approved by the Ordinary.

CHAPTER XVI.

OF SILENCE.

Silence being the ornament of religious souls and the faithful guardian of interior recollection, the Sisters shall observe it as much as circumstances will permit, except at the time appointed for recreation. They shall observe silence in the Dormitory, in the Chapel, and during meals in the Refectory. Whenever it may be necessary to speak in time of silence, they shall do so in a very low voice and as briefly as possible. In observing silence exteriorly they shall endeavor to keep their minds recollected and fixed on what may tend to their greater perfection.

CHAPTER XVII.

OF UNION AND CHARITY.

1. "Love one another as I have loved you;" this was the special precept of Jesus

Christ to His Apostles, and in the observance of it (inseparably united as it is with the grand precept of loving God) consists, according to the Apostle, "the plenitude of the law." This mutual love our Saviour desires may be so perfect as to resemble, in some manner, the love and union which subsists between Himself and His Heavenly Father. This He inculcated in the strongest terms at the last conference He held with His disciples. This was His last injunction, which as a rich inheritance He bequeathed to His followers, and by the observance of which they should prove themselves to be really His disciples.

2. This mutual union and love should therefore eminently characterize Religious souls. This should distinguish them from all others as true spouses and servants of Jesus Christ. The Sisters of this pious Institute, founded and grounded on charity, should therefore make this their favorite

virtue, as it was that of their Divine Master; they shall study to maintain and cherish it so perfectly amongst themselves that it may be truly said there is in them but one heart and one soul in God. This love for one another should be such as to emulate the love and union of the blessed in heaven.

3. They shall therefore in conversation, manners, and conduct, most cautiously avoid whatever may in the least disturb their union or lessen in the smallest degree their mutual charity and love; and shall be solicitous to repair the smallest offence by quickly asking pardon, which should be immediately granted without contention or reserve.

4. They shall on all occasions assist and help one another, bearing with patience and charity each other's defects, weaknesses, and imperfections. They shall never dispute; but should they happen to differ in opinion on any subject, they shall

propose their reasons with moderation and charity. They shall never speak of the faults of the Sisters except to the Mother Superior, and then only with the charitable purpose of their amendment, and after consulting God in prayer, and their spiritual director. They shall avoid all suspicion and rash judgment, all jealousy and envy, and shall always bear in mind, in order to regulate their sentiments and conduct on this head, the noble description of charity given by the Apostle: "Charity is patient, is kind, envieth not, dealeth not perversely, is not puffed up, is not ambitious, seeketh not her own, is not provoked to anger, thinketh no evil, beareth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things."

5. As the love and union of religious persons should be founded not on flesh and blood, or any human motive, but on God alone; as their hearts should be united together in Jesus Christ, their Spouse and Redeemer in whom and for whom they

should live and love one another, the Sisters of this Institute shall not admit any particular friendships, attachments, or affections among them, and shall studiously avoid all private parties and unions, as the source of discord and divisions, and as hostile to purity of heart, to charity, and the spirit of Religion.

CHAPTER XVIII.

OF CORRECTION.

When any of the Sisters commit a fault the Sisters shall not reproach her for it. If it be grievous, they shall mildly and lovingly give her sisterly reproof three different times as prescribed by the Gospel, after which, should she persevere in her fault, the Mother Superior shall be informed of it. But if to prevent scandal or other bad consequences it is necessary to apply immediate remedies, then, without

naming the person, she to whose knowledge it first comes shall take the advice of the Mother Superior and the spiritual director, and if she be desired shall name her. Once a month all the Sisters, kneeling in public Chapter for the exercise of humility, shall accuse themselves of their faults and public transgressions. The Superior shall lovingly correct and sweetly admonish the Sisters in each circumstance without diminishing the weight of their offences.

CHAPTER XIX.

OF HUMILITY.

1. Humility being the abridgment of all the discipline of a Religious life, the groundwork of the spiritual building, and the surest mark of the true servants of Christ, the Sisters shall be particularly attentive to the practice of this virtue, studying the nature and extent of it, and performing all their actions in the spirit

of the most profound, sincere, and unaffected humility.

2. They shall bear to each other great and sincere respect, not in outward behavior, looks, and words only, but really and indeed, in heart and in mind. The young shall reverence the elder, and all shall with true humility endeavor to vie with each other in exhibiting towards their Sisters a respectful demeanor, in honor, as Saint Paul expresses it, preventing one another.

CHAPTER XX.

OF FAST AND ABSTINENCE.

The Sisters of this Institute being continually employed in spiritual and corporal works of mercy shall be obliged to fast only on the days commanded by the Church, and on the eves of the Conception, Nativity, Presentation, and Purification of the Blessed Virgin; also on the eve of the Feast of Our Lady of Mercy.

CHAPTER XXI.

OF THE REFECTORY.

The Sisters shall breakfast, dine, and sup together in the Refectory, which shall be kept with perfect regularity and neatness. Silence shall be observed, and a spiritual book read at dinner and supper, except when there shall be recreation. The Mother Superior shall select the book to be read.

CHAPTER XXII.

OF THE CARE OF THE SICK SISTERS AND
SUFFRAGES FOR THE DEAD.

1. Special care shall be taken of the sick, and proper remedies provided for them according to the prescription of the physician. The Sisters, particularly the Mother Superior, shall frequently visit them, treat them with the tenderest charity, and piously console them. If

death be apprehended, the Mother Superior shall be careful to have the Holy Sacraments administered in due time. The whole Community shall attend with lights in their hands at the administration of the Viaticum and Extreme Unction.

2. On the death of a Sister the Office for the Dead shall be said by the other Sisters for the repose of her soul, and three general Communions and three Masses shall be offered for her. Should the Mother Superior die in office they shall have six Masses celebrated for her.

RULE AND CONSTITUTIONS
—OF THE—
RELIGIOUS
SISTERS OF MERCY.

—
SECOND PART.
—

CHAPTER I.

OF THE SUPERIOR AND THE VISITATION OF
THE CONVENT.

1. This Religious Congregation shall be always subject to the authority and jurisdiction of the Diocesan Bishop, and the Sisters shall respect and obey him as their principal Superior after the Holy See. If on account of his many avocations he should not himself have leisure to attend immediately to the direction of the Community a Priest shall be appointed by

him, on whose prudence, piety, and experience he can depend to govern and direct under him, and to whom he will give the necessary faculties.

2. The Priest thus nominated shall duly attend to the government and good order of the Community in spirituals and temporals. He shall watch over the exact observance of the Constitutions for the purpose of maintaining good order, peace, and charity; and shall assist the Mother Superior with his counsel and advice in all weighty matters. She shall not undertake any matter of importance relating to the Convent or Community without the consent of the Bishop.

3. When it shall not be convenient for the Bishop to be present at the Reception or Profession of the Novices, the Superior appointed by him shall officiate. No person shall be admitted as a Postulant, or if admitted, be sent away without it being made known to him or to the Bishop. He

shall sign the Acts of Profession and the annual accounts of the receipts and expenditures of the Convent.

4. The Superior shall visit the Convent every year, in the third week of January, (should not the Bishop himself think fit to do it), to examine whether the Rule and Constitutions be exactly observed, the obligations of the Institute be duly fulfilled, and whether the Sisters live in perfect harmony, union, and charity.

5. That the visitor may come to the knowledge of the real state of the Convent, all the Sisters shall individually appear before him, one after the other, beginning with the youngest, and shall answer such questions as he shall deem expedient to put concerning the said matter. Should he by this inquiry discover any disorder or irregularity, or anything whatever contrary to the spirit of the Institute, he shall prescribe such remedies as in his prudence and discretion he shall judge most likely

to reform every abuse, and to restore good order, regularity, and union in the Community. He shall cautiously avoid discovering the name of the person or persons from whom he may have had his information, and shall only make such use of it as may tend to promote the spiritual and temporal welfare of the establishment.

6. Before he closes the visitation he shall examine the accounts of the annual receipts and disbursements signed by the Mother Superior and the Bursar. If he find that the expenses exceed the income he shall, for the purpose of clearing the debts, suppress all unnecessary expenses; but he shall not take from the food and raiment, which were promised to the Religious on their embracing the Institute. It were better for the Sisters to submit to a temporary inconvenience than suffer the Convent to be ruined, the inevitable consequence of debts inconsiderately allowed to accumulate. He shall render to the Bishop

an account of the actual state of the Convent. The Bishop shall make a visitation every third year, or more frequently if he deem it expedient.

CHAPTER II.

OF THE ELECTION OF THE MOTHER SUPERIOR.

1. The Mother Superior shall be elected from amongst the Vocals, distinguished for her virtue, prudence, and discretion; she shall be at least thirty years old, and of five years' Profession, (except in Convents newly founded), and must have the majority of votes for the validity of her Election.

2. The Mother Superior when duly elected shall govern for three years; she can, with the approbation of the Bishop, be re-elected for three years more. In Convents newly founded the first Mother Superior shall govern for six years, unless

there be canonical reasons for her being removed from office during that time.

3. On the Saturday immediately after the Feast of the Ascension of our Lord, the Chapter shall be assembled in presence of the Bishop, or his Delegate, at an appointed hour. The Mother Superior shall then resign her office into his hands, who, accepting her resignation, shall absolve her from the exercise of it, saying: "We absolve thee, Sister [N.], from the office of Mother Superior of this Community, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen." He will then transfer the authority to the Mother Assistant by giving her the keys of the Convent, after which he will exhort the Sisters to think seriously on a new Election against the following Thursday—that is, the Octave of the Ascension—and to have no other view in the choice they will make but the greater glory of God, and the good order, peace, and welfare of

the Community. They shall repeat the hymn, "Veni Creator Spiritus," the versicle, "Emitte Spiritum," and the prayer, "Deus qui corda," with the "Salve Regina," and retire.

4. On the Sunday within the octave there shall be a general Communion for the approaching Election; and every morning after Mass, and every night after the Litany, the "Veni Creator" shall be said, that God may direct the choice of the Community.

5. On Thursday, the day of the Election, a Mass shall be celebrated and a general Communion offered for this intention. The Election shall begin with the hymn "Veni Creator."

6. The billets, which should be all of the same form, and folded in the same manner, shall be prepared and distributed the day before among the Vocals, each of whom shall write down on her respective billet the name and surname of the Sister for

whom she intends to vote. The Sisters shall never intimate in any manner for whom they vote, nor be curious to see the billets of others. They shall avoid all conversation on the subject. If any of the Vocals be sick and not able to attend the Election, two Sisters shall receive her vote sealed, which shall be thrown in with the rest.

7. When all the billets are collected in a box prepared for the purpose, the President shall reckon them; and if they do not correspond with the number of Vocals, another scrutiny shall be made; but if the number do correspond, the President shall open the billets one by one, and show it to his Assistant, who shall write down the name mentioned in it. Should there be an equality of votes for two or more, a new scrutiny shall be made; and if neither in this, nor in a third there be found a majority, the Election shall devolve to the Bishop.

8. The billets having been duly examined, if there be a majority in favor of one the President shall call her, and she being on her knees before him, he shall declare her canonically elected, without mentioning the number of votes which were in her favor. He shall then confirm the Election, saying: "We confirm this Election, and declare you, Sister [N.], Mother Superior of this Community, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen." The billets shall then be burned.

9. The Mother Superior, being thus confirmed, shall take her place as Superior. The bell shall be rung to announce the Election, and all the Sisters, according to seniority, shall, on their knees, kiss her hand. The "Ave Maris Stella" shall be sung, with the Psalm "Laudate Dominum omnes Gentes." The Assistant shall write the Act of Election and see it signed by the President.

10. The Mother Superior thus elected shall make choice of such Sisters as she shall in conscience deem most fit for the offices of Mother Assistant, Bursar, and Mistress of Novices, and propose them to the Chapter. The Election shall be made with white and black beans. If all or any of them shall be rejected the Mother Superior shall propose others. The Election made, the Mother Superior, with the three, shall make choice of such Sisters as she shall judge qualified for the other offices, in which they shall remain until the Mother Superior, having had the advice of the Mother Assistant, Bursar, and Mistress of Novices, shall think fit to remove them.

11. Where there are not seven Professed to make the Election, the Bishop shall nominate the Mother Superior, and to the other principal charges of the Convent, after consulting the Senior Sister of the Community.

CHAPTER III.

OF THE OFFICE OF MOTHER SUPERIOR.

1. The Mother Superior, to govern with advantage to the Community and merit to herself, should show herself a model of regular observance, that by her good example she may induce the Community to fulfill the duties of the Institute.

2. She shall take care that regular discipline be maintained, that the Rule and Constitutions be strictly observed, and that the Sisters diligently apply to their respective charges and employments.

3. She shall tenderly comfort and support the dejected, if there be any such, correct those who transgress, and impose such penances as may be judged expedient.

4. She shall provide for all the wants of the Sisters and banish all superfluities.

5. Whatever the Sisters disclose of their interior she shall keep an inviolable secret; nor shall it be lawful for her to speak

thereof even to the Bishop, except to ask advice, and even then she should not give the least indication of the Sister in question without her own express permission.

6. The Mother Superior shall preside at all the public exercises and meetings. The Sisters are obliged at all times and on all occasions to respect her as their Mother in God, and to show a ready obedience to her.

7. She shall assemble the Discreets on the first Wednesday of every month, and oftener if circumstances require, to examine the accounts and to consult on the measures most expedient for promoting the spiritual and temporal welfare of the Community. She shall hear their opinions, and shall not be the least displeased should they be different from hers, but show herself disposed to coincide with their opinion when she shall be convinced by their reasons.

8. She shall call a meeting of all the

Sisters on the last Wednesday of every month, to inquire into the observance of the Constitutions; and if any be found remiss in observing them, the Mother Superior shall rebuke them with charity, exhort them to be more observant in future, and, if necessary, impose such penance as she may deem expedient.

9. The Mother Superior shall procure that every Novice be examined by the Bishop or his Delegate one month before the time of her Profession. She shall sign the Acts of Profession and of Chapter, the accounts, and all the written documents relating to the temporal or spiritual concerns of the Community.

CHAPTER IV.

OF THE OFFICE OF MOTHER ASSISTANT.

1. The Mother Assistant, being the first of the Discreets, shall, in the absence of the Mother Superior, preside at Choir and

at all other public meetings. She shall assist the Mother Superior in all doubtful and difficult matters; she shall undertake nothing against her will, and shall give her an account of whatever she orders in her absence.

2. She shall carefully examine into the wants of the Sisters, and inform the Mother Superior thereof, that they may be provided with all that is needful.

CHAPTER V.

OF THE OFFICE OF THE DEPOSITARY OR BURSAR.

The Bursar, second in rank among the Discreets, should be instructed in household affairs, prudent and economical, and qualified by her affability to engage the esteem and respect of those with whom she shall have business to transact. She shall keep an exact account in writing of all the receipts and expenditures, which

she shall lay every week before the Mother Superior, in presence of the Discreets, to be audited and signed by her.

CHAPTER VI.

OF THE MISTRESS OF NOVICES.

1. As the order and preservation of a Religious Institute depend much on the pious and religious conduct of the Novices, the Sister appointed to this important office shall be discreet, meek, and devout; of great prudence, and experienced in all the duties of the Institute; judicious in discerning the dispositions of such as are under her care, and endowed with talents to form their minds to the practice of every virtue.

2. She shall study to make them rightly understand the end they should have in view in quitting the world; which is, to unite their hearts perfectly to God by

dying to themselves and to the world, so as to apply all the powers and faculties of their soul to the service of their Heavenly Spouse by a spirit of Evangelical poverty entirely divested of all inordinate attachments; by the purest chastity, and by an unlimited obedience, grounded on self-denial, and an entire surrender of their own will. In short. that this Institute is founded on Calvary, there to serve a crucified Redeemer, by whose example the Sisters ought to crucify their senses, imaginations, and caprices for the love of their Divine Master.

3. She shall teach them modesty, meekness, and humility; encouraging them to conquer those pettish and childish humors, which weaken the spirit and render it vapid and languid, in order that they may bring forth fruits of solid and vigorous sanctity. And because this undertaking is arduous, she shall teach them to place all their trust and confidence in God and

in the protection of the Blessed Virgin Mary. She shall teach them the method of prayer and meditation; how they should confess briefly, distinctly, and contritely; and how to render their Confessions and Communions profitable.

4. As Religious obedience is the principal virtue of Religious life, and as in it chiefly consists the perfect sacrifice of the soul to God, the Mistress of Novices shall give her greatest attention to instruct them in the nature, extent, motives, and advantages of this sublime virtue; that knowing its excellence they may apply themselves with earnestness to the practice of it, not only by complying without hesitation in their actions, but also by submitting their will and judgment to the will and judgment of their Superiors. To this end she shall teach them to consider God in their Superiors, and His will in their directions; being as firmly convinced that God speaks to them by their Superiors as if an angel

should speak, according to the words of Jesus Christ: "Whoever heareth you, heareth Me."

5. She shall impress on their minds that by the virtue of obedience the Religious soul becomes most intimately united to God; that He so governs and directs her that she can say with the Apostle: "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me;" that it is God that regulates all the thoughts, words, and actions of her life, and that in consequence actions in themselves the most trivial become in some manner divine, of great value and merit for eternity. In fine, that in holy obedience she has an infallible means of knowing and fulfilling the will of God in all its perfection—an advantage of the greatest importance, which the Religious soul enjoys over the most regular and devout who remain in the world.

6. She shall endeavor to form in them a sublime idea of and most cordial love

and reverence for our holy Institute, and fill their hearts with the tenderest pity and charity for the poor. She shall inculcate the sincerest desire for the salvation of mankind, that so they may pour forth fervent prayers for all, but in particular for the Holy Roman Catholic Church, the Pope, Prelates, and Clergy; frequently offering their Communions for the propagation of the true religion, especially in these kingdoms.

7. She shall particularly impress on their minds that the Sisters should have but one heart and one soul in Christ their Heavenly Spouse; and as our Divine Saviour has by the grace of their vocation united them together in one Religious body, so should they always remain united in the spirit of charity, which is the bond of perfection.

8. The Novices shall in all their wants apply to their Mistress, who shall inform the Mother Superior, or in ordinary matters provide for them herself. The Mistress

of Novices should be, as far as circumstances admit, disengaged from all other offices that she may be able to dedicate herself entirely to this very important charge.

CHAPTER VII.

OF THE DISCREETS AND THEIR OFFICE.

1. The Mother Assistant, the Depositary, and Mistress of Novices shall be the Discreets or Council of the Mother Superior, who shall consult them on all weighty and important matters, and with the aid of their advice determine what ought to be done. They are to propose whatever shall appear to them most expedient for the advantage of the Community and Institute, but cannot, without the express leave of the Mother Superior, mention out of the meeting what has been discussed thereat.

2. Each Discreet is to give her opinion candidly, assign with humility her reasons,

without affectation or strong attachment to her own judgment. One of the Discreets should be appointed by the Mother Superior to write the decision of the Council, should it be deemed necessary to do so.

CHAPTER VIII.

OF CAPITULAR ASSEMBLIES.

1. The Sisters who have a vote shall assemble in Chapter as often as the Mother Superior may think it expedient, to have their opinion on matters of importance to the Community. They shall assemble every six months to consult on the qualities and dispositions of the Postulants and Novices, and also a month before the Reception of a Postulant, and two months before the Profession of a Novice, to determine by votes on their admission. But should it be evident previous to the Chapter that the Candidate has not the requisite qualities

or dispositions for the Institute, she shall be immediately dismissed.

2. In the Chapter all shall listen with attention to whatever shall be proposed for consideration, weighing well before God every matter in their mind. They shall give their opinion with modesty, candor, and humility. In Chapters relative to Postulants and Novices, the Mistress of Novices shall make known all that she knows of the temper and dispositions of each, their abilities and love for the Institute. In all these deliberations, especially respecting the admission or dismissal of Sisters, the Vocals shall take great care to be divested of all human respect, and to have nothing in view but the greater glory of God.

3. All transactions in Chapter shall be kept inviolably secret. They shall always begin with the hymn, "Veni Creator Spiritus," and the prayer, "Deus qui corda," with the "Sub tuum presidium," and shall close with the "Salve Regina."

CHAPTER IX.

OF LAY SISTERS.

1. Lay Sisters admitted to this religious Institute should, besides the essential requisites, vocation, good constitution, and plain education, have manners and appearance suited to Religious who must be seen in public; because, although they shall be generally employed in domestic work, yet as circumstances may occur which would render their assistance necessary in other situations, they ought to be persons who could occasionally accompany the Choir Sisters without any remarkable exterior difference.

2. The Lay Sisters shall be distinguished by a white apron, which shall receive the benediction of the Bishop, together with the habit, veil, etc., and be always deemed an essential part of their Religious dress. Their habit shall be without train. They shall unite with the Sisters in spiritual

exercises when not prevented by their respective employments. They shall breakfast, dine, and sup together, like the Choir Sisters, in the refectory, after or before the Choir Sisters as place and circumstances demand.

3. The state of Lay Sisters is very similar to that which our humble Redeemer made choice of in this world—who dedicated Himself to the service of others without ever requiring to be served Himself. It will greatly animate them in all their labors to reflect that they are working for a Heavenly Master who will take into account their toil and pain, lighten their difficulties, and most generously reward every exertion they will make for the love of Him.

CHAPTER X.

OF ESTABLISHMENT.

As the Sisters of this holy Institute are devoted to the poor, from whom they

cannot receive any temporal emolument, and as they are strictly forbidden to take lodgers, no new Convent shall be opened unless a certain revenue adequate to its support be ascertained and approved by the Bishop and by the Discreets of the Convent.

These Rules shall not oblige under pain of sin, mortal or venial, except when the transgression of any article is a violation of the vows, or in itself a sin independent of the Rule.

DECRETUM.

*S. Congregationis Generalis de Propaganda,
Fide habitæ die 20. Julii anno 1840.*

Cum pientissimarum mulierum Societas quæ *Sororum Misericordiae* dicitur, Dublini fuerit instituta R. P. D. Daniele Murray, Archiepiscopo probante erecta, et religiosissimæ præsertim feminae Catherinae MacAuley studio fundata; cum que Epis-

copi quamplures Societas istius confirmationem ab Apostolica Sede postulaverint, S. Congregatio Generalis de Propaganda Fide habita die 20 Julii anno 1840, referente Emo et Rmo D. Paulo S. R. E. Cardinali Polidoris, perpendens quanta sit utilitas profecta jam, et in posterum jure expectanda ex ejusdem Societatis institutione, quae pauperibus praesertim juvenilibus, infirma valetudine laborantibus omniratione erigendis, mulieribus in honestatis discrimine versantibus, charitatis, ac religionis officio tuendis sedulo dedita est; censuit ac decrevit supplicandum S. Smo Domino Nostro ut Regulas, qua superius relatae sunt, praescribendo simul ut vota a Sororibus Societati addictis, quoad aliter a S. Sede statuatur, Simplicia esse debeant, confirmare dignaretur.

Hanc autem S. Congregationis sententiam S. Smo Domino Nostro GREGORIO PP. XVI relata ab R. P. D. Ignatio Cadolini Archiepiscopo Edesseno S. Congregationis

Secretario, eadem Sanctitas Sua in audientia die 6 Junii, anno 1841, in omnibus probavit, ac Regulas et Constitutiones de quibus agitur ratione, qua supra significatum est, benigne confirmavit.

Datum Romae ex aedibus Sacrae Congregationis de Propaganda Fide die 5 mensis Julii anno 1841.

J. PH. CARD. FRANSONIUS, *Praefectus*,
I. Archiepiscopus Edessenus Secretarius.

VENI CREATOR.

Creative Spirit, come, descend,
 Visit these souls of thine;
 Guide and inspire, support, amend,
 With influence benign.

Thou Paraclete, so truly styled,
 Thou gift of the Most High;
 Enlivening fire, yet sweetly mild,
 And unctious moving sigh.

The sevenfold gift to mortals sent,
 Finger of God's right hand,
 Truth in each language eloquent,
 Resounds at thy command.

Light up in us this sacred fire,
 Reanimate our hearts,
 Cherish, support. direct. inspire,
 And thy whole self impart.

With power resistless now repel
 Our souls' most dangerous foe;
 Guide us secure from death and hell,
 Thy peace, thy love bestow.

Give us the Father here to know,
 To love and praise the Son,
 And Thee, the Spirit of the two,
 United all in one.

To God the Father glory be,
 And Son, who from the dead
 Arose in immortality,
 The Holy Ghost to shed.

V. Send forth thy Spirit and they shall be created.

R. And thou wilt renew the face of the earth.

O God, who by the light of the Holy Ghost didst instruct the hearts of the faithful, grant by the direction of the same Holy Spirit that we may relish what is right, and always enjoy His consolations, through Jesus Christ.

We fly to thy protection, Holy Mother of God! Despise not our petitions in our necessities, but ever deliver us from all dangers, O glorious and Blessed Virgin.

SALVE REGINA.

Hail, Holy Queen, Mother of Mercy, our life, our sweetness, and our hope. To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve, to thee do we send up our sighs, mourning

and weeping, from this vale of tears. Turn, then, most gracious advocate, thy eyes of mercy towards us, and, after this our painful exile, show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus. O clement, O pious, O sweet Virgin Mary.

V. Pray for us, Holy Mother of God.

R. That we may be made, etc.

O Almighty and Eternal God, who, by the co-operation of the Holy Ghost, didst so prepare the body and soul of the glorious Virgin Mary that she might deserve to become a worthy habitation of thy Son, grant that we who rejoice in her commemoration may, by her pious intercession, be delivered from present evils and everlasting death.

Through the same Jesus Christ, etc.
Amen.

NOTE.—The Order of the Sisters of Mercy, of which the foregoing are the Rules and Constitutions, was established in Dublin, A. D. 1827, by Mrs. Catherine MacAuley, with the approbation of Archbishop Murray; it was approved of by Pope Pius the VIII, A. D. 1833, and confirmed by Pope Gregory the XVI, A. D. 1841.

DECREE.

Of S. Congregation of Bishops and Regulars. 17th of December, 1890.

Just as it is the fate of human things how praiseworthy and holy soever they may be in themselves, even so is it of laws wisely enacted, to be liable to be misused and perverted to purposes opposed and foreign to their nature. Wherefore it sometimes happens that they no longer serve the purpose which the lawmakers had in view; nay, they sometimes even produce quite a contrary result.

Much it is to be deplored that such has proved to be the case with the laws of several Congregations, Societies, and Institutes, both of women who emit simple or solemn vows, and of men who by their profession and discipline are merely laymen. For, inasmuch as occasionally their Consti-

tutions permitted the making a manifestation of conscience, in order that thereby the members might the more easily learn, in their doubts, from experienced Superiors how to walk in the path of perfection, it has happened, on the contrary, that some of the latter have introduced the practice of thoroughly inquiring into the state of their subjects' conscience, which is a thing reserved exclusively to the Sacrament of Penance. In like manner, and in conformity with the prescriptions of the Sacred Canons, it was ordered that Sacramental Confession in all such communities should be made to the respective Ordinary and Extraordinary Confessors; while, on the other hand, the arbitrary conduct of some Superiors has gone so far as to refuse to their subjects an Extraordinary Confessor, even in cases when the conscience of the persons so refused stood greatly in need of such privilege. These Superiors were given a rule of discretion and prudence for the

purpose of enabling them to direct their subjects in a proper and right use of peculiar penitential exercises and other practices of piety ; but this very rule, also, was so perverted by abuse that they [the Superiors] took it on themselves to permit at their pleasure, their subjects to approach the Holy Table, or even sometimes to forbid them Communion altogether. Hence it has happened that such regulations as these, established for the salutary and wise purpose of promoting the spiritual progress of members and fostering in communities the union growing out of peace and concord, have not unfrequently resulted in imperilling the salvation of souls, in deeply disturbing consciences, and, moreover, in the disturbance of exterior peace,—as it is most evidently proved by the appeals and complaints frequently made to the Holy See.

Wherefore our Most Holy Father, Leo XIII., impelled by the peculiar solicitude

for which he is distinguished toward this most select portion of his flock, in the audience which he gave me, the cardinal-Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, on the 14th day of December, 1890, after carefully and diligently considering everything, has willed, determined, and decreed as follows :

I. His Holiness annuls, abrogates, and declares of no force whatever hereafter all regulations whatsoever in the Constitutions of Pious Societies and Institutes of women who emit either simple or solemn vows, as well as in those of men of the purely lay order (even though the said constitutions should have received from the Holy See approbation in any form soever, even that which is termed most special), in this one point, in which these Constitutions regard the secret manifestation of conscience in whatsoever manner or under what name soever. He therefore seriously enjoins on all the Superiors, Male and Female, of such

Institutes, Congregations, and Societies to absolutely cancel and expunge altogether from their respective Constitutions, Directories, and Manuals all the aforesaid regulations. Likewise he declares whatsoever usages and customs in this matter, even such as are from time out of mind, to be null and void and to be abolished.

II. He, moreover, forbids absolutely such Superiors, Male and Female, no matter what may be their rank and eminence, from endeavoring directly or indirectly, by command, counsel, fear, threats, or blandishments, to induce their subjects to make to them any such manifestation of conscience; and he commands these subjects, on their part, to denounce to the higher Superiors such as dare to induce them to make such manifestation; and if the guilty one be the Superior-General, the denunciation should by them be made to this Sacred Congregation.

III. This, however, in nowise hinders

subjects from freely and of their own accord opening their hearts to their Superiors, for the purpose of obtaining from their prudence, counsel and direction, in doubts and perplexities, in order to aid them in acquiring virtues and advancing in perfection.

IV. Moreover, while the prescriptions of the Holy Council of Trent, *Sess. 25, Cap. 10, de Regul.*, retain their full vigor, as well as the decrees of Benedict XIV. of holy memory in the Constitution *Pastoralis Curæ*, His Holiness admonishes Prelates and Superiors not to deny their subjects an extraordinary Confessor as often as the need of their conscience requires it, and without seeking to find out in any way the reason why their subjects make such a demand, or without showing that they resent it. And, lest so provident a disposition as this should be made illusory, he exhorts the Ordinaries to name, in all localities of their dioceses, in which there are Communities of women,

well-qualified priests with the necessary faculties, to whom such Religious may easily have recourse to receive the Sacrament of Penance.

V. As to what regards either permission or prohibition to receive Holy Communion, His Holiness also decrees that such permission or prohibition belongs solely to the ordinary or extraordinary Confessor, the Superiors having no right whatever to interfere in the matter, save only the case in which any one of their subjects had given scandal to the community since his or her last Confession, or had been guilty of some grievous public fault, and this only until the guilty one had once more received the Sacrament of Penance.

VI. All are hereby admonished to prepare themselves diligently and to approach Holy Communion on the days prescribed in their respective Rules; and when the Confessor may judge conducive to the spiritual advancement of any member to

receive more frequently, he may give the needful permission. But whoever receives from the Confessor the permission to receive more frequent or daily Communion is bound to inform the Superior of the same; should the latter think that he has just and serious reasons to oppose such frequent Communion, he is bound to make them known to the Confessor, in whose judgment he must absolutely acquiesce.

VII. His Holiness, furthermore, commands all Superiors General, Provincial and Local Superiors of the Institutes aforementioned, whether of men or of women, to observe zealously and accurately the regulations prescribed in this Decree under pain of incurring *ipso facto* the penalties decreed against Superiors who violate the mandates of the Holy See.

VIII. He lastly commands that copies of this present Decree, translated into the vernacular, shall be inserted in the Constitutions of the said pious Institues, and that

at least once in a twelvemonth, at a stated time in each House, either in the public Refectory, or in Chapter assembled for this special purpose, this decree shall be read in a loud and intelligible voice.

And thus hath His Holiness determined and decreed, notwithstanding all things to the contrary, even such as are worthy of special and individual mention.

Given at Rome from the Secretariate of the said Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, on the 17th of December, 1890.

I. CARDINAL VERGA, *Prefect.*

FR. ALOISIUS, Bishop of Callinicum,

Secretary.



CATHOLIC THEOLOGICAL UNION



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Sisters of Mercy.
Rules and constitutions [of
the] Religious Sisters of





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